

**Godsey, Cindi**

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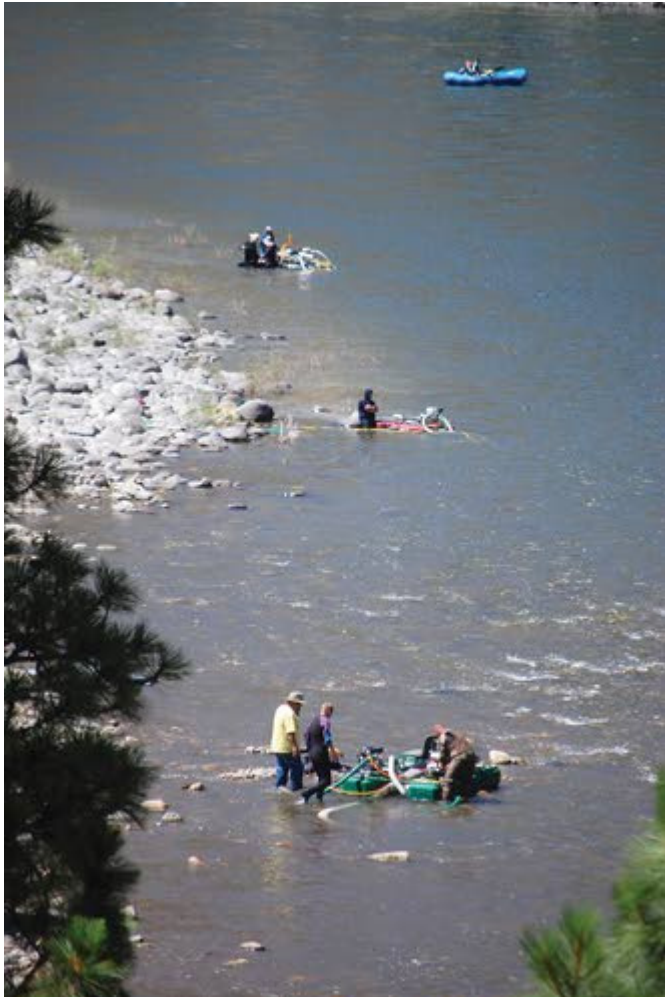
**From:** DeGering, Tracy  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 01, 2014 6:58 AM  
**To:** Holsman, Marianne; MacIntyre, Mark; Kowalski, Ed  
**Cc:** Lidgard, Michael; Godsey, Cindi  
**Subject:** FW: LMT article

FYI...  
Tracy

**From:** Jonathan Oppenheimer [mailto:joppenheimer@idahoconservation.org]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, July 01, 2014 7:03 AM  
**To:** DeGering, Tracy; DeMaria, Eva; Werntz, James  
**Subject:** LMT article

## Protests stir up no reaction

By ERIC BARKER of the Tribune | Posted: Tuesday, July 1, 2014 12:00 am



Protests stir up no reaction

Suction dredge miners run their gear Monday along the Salmon River near Riggins. Miners from across the West are gathering in Idaho County this week as a protest against Environmental Protection Agency regulations that shut them out of most of the Salmon and Clearwater river basins.

RIGGINS - Miners operating their small suction dredges Monday on the Salmon River in defiance of federal regulations equated their actions with speech protected by the First Amendment.

"Our dredges are our protest signs - it's basically an extension of us," said organizer John Crossman of Boise.

But many of the miners gathering along the Salmon River east of Riggins also took care to cover or remove the license plates from their vehicles to make it harder for Environmental Protection Agency officials to identify and possibly fine them.

About 40 people assembled Monday afternoon at Island Bar and about six of them operated their dredge mines. They hope their modest numbers will swell as the holiday weekend approaches and their protest against an EPA permit hits its peak Friday with a 4 p.m. rally at Riggins City Park.

"I'm hoping by the end of the week we will fill this bar up," Crossman said.

He said people are traveling from Idaho and across the West to attend.

"I came all the way up here from California to support John (Crossman) and his group," said John Ratley of Modesto, Calif., and the field manager of the American Mining Rights Association.

The camp included tents, pickup truck campers and recreational vehicles. A large Gadsden flag with its "Don't Tread on Me" motto waved in the wind and a rebel flag hung from an RV. The camp had a sprinkling of anti-EPA signs.

So far, the miners have met no resistance and said they haven't seen or heard from the EPA. But they are aware they could be cited for running their dredges.

"If somebody gets a ticket, it will have to go to court," said Mike Walker of Fresno, Calif., and a member of the American Mining Rights Association.

In the past, suction dredge miners in Idaho had to get a permit from the state. But last year, the EPA required them to also acquire a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System permit. That permit is not available in most of the streams that are home to threatened or endangered species like salmon, steelhead and bull trout, streams and rivers on Indian reservations or rivers that are part of the National Wild and Scenic River system. Those regulations effectively banned dredging in most of the streams in the Salmon and Clearwater river basins, as well as several other of the state's watersheds.

The miners contend they are not adding pollution to the streams and rivers they work in and thus do not need the permit. Instead, they said they use the dredges to suck sand and gravel from the river bottom, sort and remove the heavy gold-bearing material and discharge the leftovers back into the water.

Crossman pointed to the water leaving the sluice box of a dredge operated by Jeremy Kauffman of Nampa where there was a faint and short plume in the clear water.

"It's just sand," he said.

Kauffman said miners are not opposed to regulation and were happy with the old system overseen by the Idaho Department of Water Resources.

"We don't have a problem with the state rules," he said.

He said dredging is a family pastime much like fishing, another activity he enjoys.

"I've never killed a fish with my dredge but I'm an avid fisherman and I've killed some with my fishing pole," he said.

Crossman said he hopes the protest will let people see what dredging is all about and that it will inspire other miners to fight the government.

"I think we will get more people standing up for their rights," he said.

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